

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SY-10 NEA-10 SCCT-02 CU-04 SS-20 AID-20

FBO-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01

USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 OPR-02 A-01 DRC-01 /120 W

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P R 121040Z MAR 74 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7778
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CO MARSCTYGRDBN HQMC WASHDC

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BANGKOK FOR RSO AND HONG KONG FOR RSO AND RMO

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, ASEC, BM

SUBJECT: DISTURBANCE AT MARINE GUARD RESIDENCE

1. SUMMARY. GANGS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND OTHERS STONED RESIDENCE OCCUPIED BY MSG DETACHMENT SPORADICALLY FOR ABOUT 2-1/2 HOURS NIGHT OF MARCH 11, CAUSING MINOR PROPERTY DAMAGE BUT NO INJURIES. INCIDENT APPARENTLY WAS SPARKED BY COMBINATION OF STUDENT TENSION OVER EXAMS AND DISLIKE FOR POLICE AND GOVERNMENT, PREVIOUS BRUSHES WITH MSG. OTHER CONCEIVABLE POSSIBLE CAUSES MIGHT BE RECENT ACCIDENT INVOLVING MARINE NCOIC, AND PERHAPS JEALOUSY OVER BURMESE GIRL DATING A MARINE. GUB RESPONDED RAPIDLY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH LARGE-SCALE POLICE AND OTHER PROTECTION. EMBOFFS PRESENTED NOTE TO FOREIGN MINISTRY AND GAVE FULLER ORAL ACCOUNT OF INCIDENT MARCH 12. CHIEF OF PROTOCOL EXPRESSED OFFICIAL REGRETS. WE DO NOT EXPECT FURTHER SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. BEGINNING ABOUT 2100 LOCAL ON NIGHT OF MARCH 11, GROUP OF SOME 70-100 YOUNG MEN, MOSTLY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, STONED
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RESIDENCE NEAR UNIVERSITY CAMPUS OCCUPIED BY EMBASSY MSG DE-

TACHMENT, CAUSING MINOR DAMAGE TO HOUSE AND PARKED EMBASSY VEHICLE BUT NO PERSONAL INJURIES. PRESENT IN HOUSE AT TIME WERE FIVE MARINES, NEWLY-ARRIVED NCOIC WITH WIFE AND SON, AND ONE MARINE'S BURMESE DATE. POLICE ARRIVED PROMPTLY AND BY 2130 HAD DISPERSED GROUP AND ESTABLISHED WIDE CORDON AROUND GENERAL AREA. FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS ALSO NOTIFIED.

3. STONING BEGAN AGAIN ABOUT 2200 AND CONTINUED SPORADICALLY FOR ABOUT ONE HOUR, WITH GROUPS OF 50-70 INVOLVED. A FEW OLDER MEN (IN 30'S) WERE NOTED IN SOME OF THESE GROUPS, BUT MOSTLY WERE STUDENTS AND YOUTHS. GUB MOVED IN LARGE REINFORCEMENTS OF POLICE, MILITARY, PLAINCLOTHSMEN AND FIRE ENGINES, UNDER SUPERVISION OF SPECIAL BRACH CHIEF MAJ. SOE MYINT, MAKING A NUMBER OF ARRESTS BUT AVOIDING CONFRONTATION WHICH MIGHT HAVE CAUSED SERIOUS INJURIES AND MORE WIDESPREAD DISTURBANCE. UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEMBERS ALSO HELPED PERSUADE DEMONSTRATORS (AND ONLOOKERS) TO DISPERSE. AREA REMAINED QUIET FROM 2330 LOCAL ON.

4. IN COOPERATION WITH GUB AND POLICE, WE ARE INVESTIGATING CAUSE OF OUTBREAK. ARRESTED STUDENTS CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN PROVOKED ABOUT TWO HOURS BEFORE OUTBREAK BY OBSCENE GESTURES OF ONE MARINE AND HIS BURMESE DATE. THIS ALLEGED INCIDENT WOULD HAVE OCCURED ONLY FEW MINUTES BEFORE NEW NCOIC AND HIS WIFE ARRIVED AT MARINE HOUSE, AND IS DENIED BY ALL MSG'S AND THEIR HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS. WE ARE SATISFIED IT IS FALSEHOOD, POSSIBLY INSPIRED BY JEALOUSY FELT OVER PRESENCE OF BURMESE GIRL IN HOUSE.

5. AS DEPT AWARE THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW PREVIOUS MINOR INCIDENTS BETWEEN MARINES AND SMALL GROUPS OF STUDENTS; IN ADDITION, THERE WAS SOME RESENTMENT AMONG STUDENTS OVER RECENT AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT INVOLVING PREVIOUS MARINE NCOIC, IN WHICH GIRL STUDENT AND HER OLDER SISTER, A UNIVERSITY LECTURER, WERE SERIOUSLY INJURED. BASIC CAUSE OF INCIDENT, LIKE PREVIOUS OUTBREAKS ON TRIVIAL OCCASIONS SUCH AS SPORTING EVENTS, SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TENSION ON CAMPUS ARISING FROM EXAMINATIONS NOW IN PROGRESS AND FROM CONTINUING STUDENT BITTERNESS.

6. WE HAVE FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF STUDENT FEELINGS AGAINST ANY INDIVIDUAL MARINE OR AGAINST USG OR AMERICANS GENERALLY, AND HAVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOT FELT IT NECESSARY TO INSTITUTE ANY SPECIAL ADDITIONAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS. INCIDENT PERHAPS BEST SEEN IN PERSPECTIVE OF EXPERIENCE TWO WEEKS AGO OF US OFFICIAL VISITOR: WALKING WITH WIFE ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUS AND LOOKING INTO STUDENT ACTIVITY CENTER, SMALL GROUP OF STUDENTS APPROACHED TO OFFER FLOWERS AND SHOW THEM AROUND.

7. GUB AUTHORITIES HIGHLY COOPERATIVE IN PROVIDING EFFECTIVE

PROTECTION, AND WILL BE ON ALERT TONIGHT AGAINST
POSSIBILITY OF ANY FURTHER OUTBREAKS.

8. EMBOFFS CALLED MARCH 12 ON CHIEF OF PROTOCOL TO DELIVER SHORT
BLAND NOTE DESCRIBING INCIDENT, AND TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL DETAILS
ORALLY. NOTE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR EFFECTIVE PROTECTIVE
ACTION ON EVENING MARCH 11, AND EMBOFFS EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE
THAT BURMESE AUTHORITIES WOULD TAKE SIMILAR ACTION IF OTHER SUCH
INCIDENTS ARISE.

9. CHIEF OF PROTOCOL SAID FURTHER INQUIRIES WOULD BE MADE INTO
SELF-JUSTIFICATORY VERSIONS OF INCIDENT GIVEN BY STUDENTS.
NOTING WITH PARTICULAR CONCERN THAT SOME STONE-THROWERS HAD
PENETRATED COMPOUND OF MARINE HOUSE, HE EXPRESSED GUB REGRETS
OVER INCIDENT AND DAMAGE CAUSED. EMBOFFS NOTED THAT, AS A
CONSEQUENCE OF EARLIER MARINE-STUDENT BRUSHES, MEASURES ARE
BEING TAKEN TO MOVE MSG INTO ANOTHER RESIDENCE
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